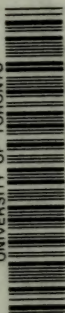
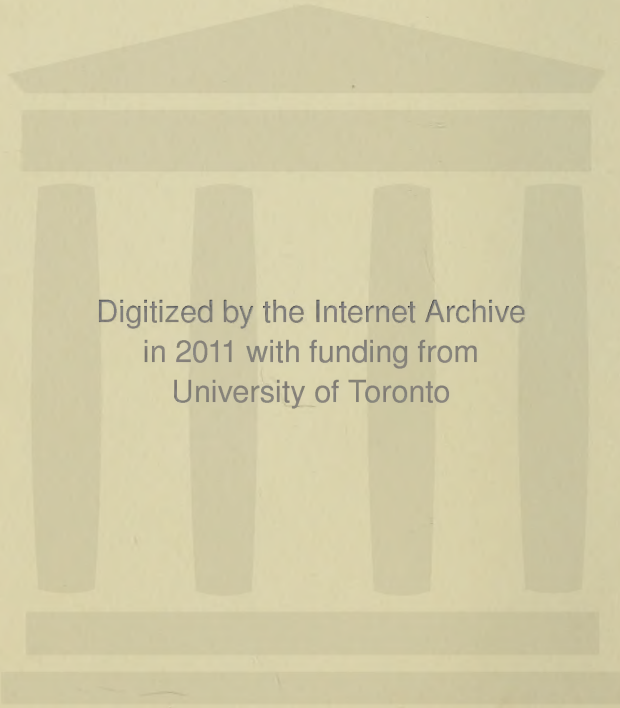


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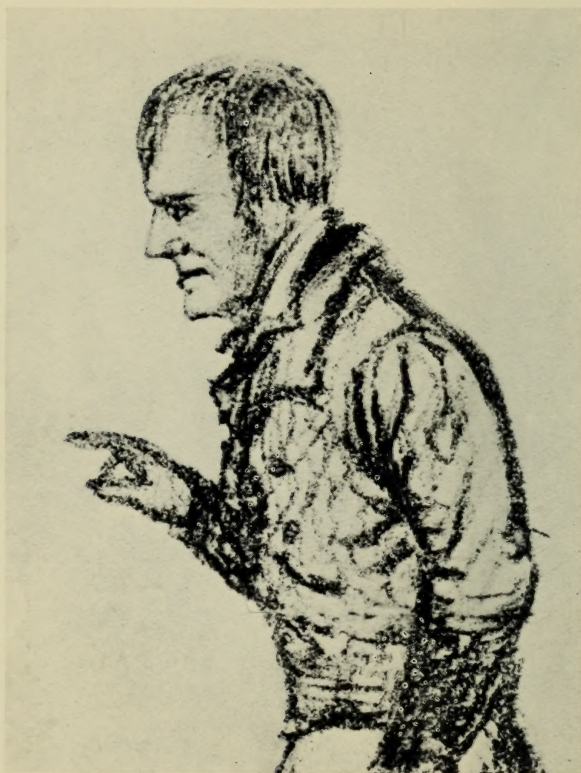


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HÖLDERLIN'S MADNESS



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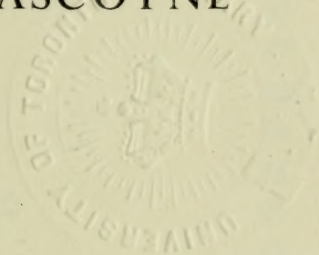
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HÖLDERLIN'S MADNESS

by

DAVID GASCOYNE



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INTRODUCTION

I

DURING certain epochs of history, separated from one another, as a rule, by long stretches of time, there is to be observed the phenomenon of a sudden upsurge of lyricism and of man's unconscious thought (which are indivisible). The mechanism of such outbreaks is as yet obscure; yet we can say, with reasonable certainty, that they accompany periods of change in the direction of society, periods of revolution. Thus, during the Renaissance, we see not only the birth of the incomparable richness of Italian painting, but also, a little later, the concerted appearance of all the Elizabethan dramatists and poets, a sudden astonishing flowering of passion and the word. During the time of the French Revolution, the industrial revolution and the appearance of the victorious bourgeoisie on the scene of history, we see the formation in Germany of the great Romantic movement, and in England, a lesser reflection, of the Lakeland school of poets and their successors. (While today, perhaps, we see the appearance of the surrealist movement in France; and in England . . .)

It is of the German Romantics that I wish to speak.

Let those who mistrust the idea of poetry manifesting itself in concerted historical outbreaks, for whom the poet's voice is unique and isolated, who, when they think of early 19th century Germany, think only of Goethe and of Heine—let these sceptics, shall I say, study in all its detail the wonderful period of Sturm und Drang. Mind linking spark with mind, thought and aspiration seeking to express themselves through many mouths at once, a simultaneous rallying to the summons of historical necessity—how else are we to explain this long procession, or rather this choir, of poets and philosophers, all contemporaries: Schelling, Fichte, Jean-Paul, Ludwig Tiecke, Hoffman, Achim and Bettina von Arnim, Clemens Brentano, Eichendorf and Mörike, Kleist, Chamisso, La Motte-Fouqué, Georg Büchner, Ritter, Novalis and Hölderlin?

They are the poets and philosophers of nostalgia and the night. A disturbed night, whose paths lead far among forgotten things, mysterious dreams and madness. And yet a night that precedes the dawn, and is full of longing for the sun. These poets look forward out of their night; and Hölderlin in his madness wrote always of sunlight and dazzling air, and the islands of the Mediterranean noon.

In Hölderlin, in fact, we find the whole adventure of the romantics epitomised in its profoundest sense: he carried within himself the germ of the development and

the resolution of its contradiction. He was one of the most thorough-going of romantics, because he went mad, and madness is the logical development of romanticism; and he went beyond romanticism, because his poetry is stronger than despair, and reaches into the future and the light.

2

Hölderlin was born in Germany, at Lauffen-am-Neckar, in the year 1770. His mother was then twenty-two years old; his father, a pastor and schoolmaster, died two years later. At the end of another two years, his mother remarried, to a Councillor Gock, a burgomaster of Nurtin-gen, who also died not long afterwards.

Hölderlin had a sister two years younger than himself, and a step-brother six years younger. During his childhood, he was brought up exclusively by women: his mother, his grandmother, and his aunt.

When he was seventeen, Hölderlin entered the college of Maulbronn. His mother wished him to become a pastor, like his father; but the ministry never appealed to him, and he only agreed to enter this career against his will. In 1788, he arrived at the seminary of Tübingen to study theology, and here he formed friendships with

more than one philosopher of his time, and particularly with Hegel. He met Schelling later.

He found his element in philosophy and poetry; theology meant little to him. He was constantly discontented at the seminary, and yet in 1793 he was admitted into the evangelical ministry by the Consistory of Stuttgart. At this time he wrote his first important poems, and his literary ambition began to grow.

A short time later he was appointed tutor to a difficult child, and the following year he travelled with his pupil to Iena and to Weimar, where he met Goethe and Herder. He had already begun *Hyperion*, his great romantic novel, and he now decided that he wished to stay in Iena and to devote his life to poetry. He attended the famous course of lectures of the philosopher Fichte. Suddenly, he changed all his plans, and returned home to his mother.

By the end of 1795, Hölderlin had obtained another tutorial post, this time at Frankfort, in the house of a merchant called Gontard. Susette Gontard, the merchant's wife, was a young and beautiful woman, greatly admired in the town. She and Hölderlin fell passionately in love. He called her Diotima, after the heroine of his romance.

The year 1796 was perhaps the only entirely happy year in Hölderlin's life. He had finished *Hyperion*, he had made the first draft of his drama *Empedocles*, and had

found his true poetic language. But the following year, difficulties arose in his relationship with Diotima, and finally, her husband having discovered their secret, there was a scene which ended in Hölderlin's leaving Frankfort for good. This was one of the most serious events of Hölderlin's life.

He went to stay in Hamburg with a friend called Sinclair (or Saint-Clair), who was one of his most faithful intimates, and who afterwards recounted many of Hölderlin's dicta to Bettina von Arnim, and thus inspired her impressionable imagination with a desire to visit the demented poet.

From this time on, he had to meet with grave material difficulties. Parted from the woman he loved, without employment and without resources, he was forced, in 1800, to return once more to his family. He had lost much strength, both physical and intellectual, and his temperament had become dangerously unsteady. In the same year, he went to stay in Stuttgart, with another friend, called Landauer; and in 1801, he travelled to Switzerland, in the hope of obtaining a tutorial post as before: after an interview with him, his prospective employers changed their minds, and he was obliged to return once again to his mother's home. He wrote to Schiller to ask for help, but received no reply.

The first unmistakable signs of the approaching disaster began to show themselves. His style changed, his

speech and manner became strangely inconsequent and abrupt. A chasm was beginning to form between him and the outer world.

At the end of 1801, he left home for Bordeaux, to undertake for the last time a tutorial engagement. Early the following Spring, he wrote his mother a clear and intelligible letter, but after that nothing is known of his actions until he appeared at his mother's house on the 7th of June in a state of obvious derangement. On June 22nd, he received the news of Diotima's death. A period of hallucinations and of furious agitation ensued.

After a time, Hölderlin seemed to recover slightly, and was able to do a certain amount of work on poems and translations. In 1804, with the aid of Sinclair, he obtained the position of librarian to the Landgrave at Hamburg. Sinclair, with whom the poet stayed during this time, thought that he was well on the road to recovery, and that he only 'wore the mask of folly, from time to time, like Hamlet'.

But finally, in 1806, Holderlin had to be sent into the asylum at Tübingen. The outbreak was worse than before. A strait-jacket was necessary. When the crisis had abated to a certain extent, the patient was sent to lodge with a carpenter called Zimmer; and Hölderlin remained in the care of his guardian, at Tübingen, in a little room which looked out upon the river Neckar, for thirty-six years.

During these years, Hölderlin did not cease to write. For some time he was capable of writing only fragments, obscure and lacerated; but by the time his madness (which would today be called *dementia praecox*) had reached a certain stage, he began to write rhymed poems, in perfectly balanced form, expressive of great peace and wisdom.

Meanwhile, he was not forgotten by the outer world. Owing to the initiative of his step-brother, his poems were published, and their beauty and originality met with increasing recognition and esteem, particularly among the younger generation of romantics. Many writers, and other people, began to come to visit the house of the carpenter Zimmer. Among them, in 1822, was a young man called Waiblinger, who related in his journal the following:

‘It is now for six years that he has been walking up and down from morning till evening in his room, muttering to himself, without ever doing anything of any use. He often gets up at night, and walks about the house; he also goes out into the street occasionally. From time to time he goes out for walks with his guardian; or else he scribbles on any pieces of paper that he can get hold of, covering them with phrases which make no sense, but which seem to have a certain meaning here and there, and are infinitely strange. I examined a bundle of these pieces of paper; I found alcaic verses among them, perfectly rhymed but devoid of meaning. I asked

whether I might keep one of these papers covered with his writing. When it is intelligible, he always speaks of suffering, Oedipus and Greece'.

In 1830, the same young man wrote a detailed account of Hölderlin's madness, which contained the following passage concerning the poet's devotion to music:

'He still loves music. He has retained the technique of playing the piano, but his manner of playing is extremely strange. It sometimes happens that he remains seated at the piano for days on end. Then he pursues a single theme, almost infantile in its simplicity, and plays it to you hundreds of times until at last it becomes unbearable. Add to this the fact that he is sometimes seized by a sort of cramp, which forces him to run up and down the keyboard like lightning; and then the disagreeable scratching of his overgrown fingernails. . . . When he has been playing for some time, and his soul has become softened, he suddenly closes his eyes and throws back his head. You would think him about to die or to vanish away altogether, but instead of that he begins to sing. Although I have heard him many times, I have never been able to discover in what language he sang, but he sang with heart-rending pathos, and it made one shudder to see and hear him. His song was characterised by sadness and melancholy'.

During the course of a conversation with the writer Gustave Kühne, in 1836, Zimmer declared:

'If he went mad, it was not because he hadn't enough mind, it was because he had too much. When the vessel is too full,

and then one tries to seal it, it has to burst. And then, when you gather up the pieces, you find that what was in it is spilt. All our savants study too much, they fill themselves with learning until another drop would make them overflow. And with that, they write the most impious things. In his case, it was his craze for out-and-out paganism that turned his mind. And all his thoughts stop at a certain point round which he turns and turns. It's like pigeons flying round the weathercock on the roof. They go round and round the whole time, until they drop for want of strength. Believe me, that's what sent him mad. All day long he has his books open on the table in front of him, and when he's alone, he reads passages aloud to himself from morning till night, declaiming like an actor and seeming as though he wanted to conquer the whole world'.

Hölderlin died peacefully, of a pulmonary congestion, in the year 1843.

3

The room where Hölderlin was shut up during all those thirty years, looked out upon a landscape of snow-capped mountain, dark forest and green valley, through which the Neckar flowed. In his madness, he transformed this earthly scene into the unearthly beauty and serenity of the poems of his last days.

In each of these poems, Hölderlin creates a world: a

world of extraordinary transparency—clear air and dazzling light. Everything stands out in light and shade, in height and depth. In movement, and yet timeless. The images pass away, and yet Nature remains. Reading them, one thinks of the 'Songs of Innocence' of his near-contemporary, William Blake, whom he so closely resembled. One thinks of the strange beauty that is revealed to us in brief flashes in the work of Beddoes. Reading the earlier poems, particularly *Patmos*, one thinks both of Coleridge (his *Kubla Khan*, and his life broken by the misery of drugs), and of Arthur Rimbaud, with his *Bateau Ivre* and his life of restless torment. (And of another madman, Gérard de Nerval, the images of whose enchanted sonnets, with their archaic proper names—'Le Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour aboli'—strongly recall the rare Hölderlin atmosphere).

It is the parallel with Arthur Rimbaud, among all these poets, that strikes me most. The placing together of the names of Hölderlin and Rimbaud gives rise to a curious reflection.

Both these poets belonged to the tradition of the *seer*. That is to say that their *ars poetica* was an offspring of the Platonic doctrine of inspiration. They believed the poet to be capable of penetrating to a secret world and of receiving the dictation of a transcendental inner voice. 'Der Dichter ein Seher' : 'Je dis qu'il faut être voyant, se faire voyant.'

For Hölderlin, as for almost all the romantics of his period (and particularly Novalis), and for Rimbaud (as for the Baudelaire of *Correspondances*), the writing of poetry was something far more than the act of composition; rather was it an activity by means of which it was possible to attain to hitherto unknown degrees of consciousness, a sort of rite, entailing the highest metaphysical implications and with a non-euclidian logic of its own.

What is it then, the secret world to which the poet penetrates, the world discovered by the poet-seer? 'The poet is he whose sees', wrote André Gide. 'And what does he see? — Paradise!' And in fact, this is so, if by Paradise we mean a state of autonomous existence unsubjected to necessity, a state of perfect freedom, without time or age, and if the non-rational imagination of the poet is distinguished precisely by its ignorance of Necessity's irrevocable laws and its defiance of the aristotelian *ananke*.

But is not freedom 'the knowledge of necessity'? Yes, if we are speaking of human freedom, of the only freedom, that is to say, to which mortals can expect to attain here on earth. But the freedom towards which the poet aspires, the 'free' Freedom of Paradise, is, on the contrary, the non-knowledge of necessity, a state in which necessity does not exist. It is this aspiration that caused Novalis to proclaim: 'Life is a malady of the spirit', and Rimbaud to cry in his despair: 'La vraie vie est absente!'

During the course of his poetic development, Hölder-

lin passed, first of all through the mysterious regions, the imaginary Mediterranean of his early *Antike Strophén*, then through the confusion and obscurity of the fragments belonging to the first period of his madness, into the sublime landscape of his last poems, which is, we can surely say, the landscape of Paradise, where 'the perfection has no plaint'.

Yet it must be remarked immediately that, in order to catch even so much as a glimpse of Paradise, the poet has to pay the price; for his undertaking is an attempt to transgress the laws of man's universe. The gates of Paradise are barred against us by the angel with the flaming sword; and the poet-seer, in attempting to escape that terrible interdiction is guilty of a promethean crime. Rimbaud, more than Hölderlin, was aware of this: '*Le poète est vraiment Voleur de Feu*', as he wrote in his famous letter. If he had not become silent and renounced his work, he too would undoubtedly have gone mad. '*Je ne pouvais pas continuer*,' he said, later; '*et puis, c'était mal*.'

Hölderlin, less conscious of the nature and the consequences of his poetic undertaking, must nevertheless have known, in brief flashes of intuition, in what direction his path was leading him: witness the mysterious broken phrase that appears at the end of the poem called *Form and Spirit*, '*— thou shalt go into the flames*'. (One thinks of Rimbaud's season in Hell, and the broken incoherence of

certain of his utterances, such as: 'Faim, soif, cris, danse, danse, danse, danse!') By the time he had reached the unearthly illumination of his last poems, Hölderlin's madness had become quite incurable. The carpenter Zimmer was perhaps wiser than one might think when he said: 'If he went mad it wasn't because he hadn't enough mind, but because he had too much'.

Out of all the turbulence of the epoch to which Hölderlin belongs, rises the giant Goethe, and with him, inevitably, Faust. The idea of knowledge accompanied by damnation is one of the basic ideas underlying the romantic movement, and provides a key to the understanding of the whole period. The same idea occurs in even more poignant form than in Faust (— why did Goethe have to grant his hero a false redemption? —) in an unfinished story called *Lenz*, by Georg Büchner* whose scant but extraordinary work has been referred to as 'the end of romanticism'. Here again we find a knowledge-thirsting poet fulfilling his destiny in madness (which is the equivalent to damnation). This faustian drama, Hölderlin lived, and that is why he is, as I said before, a very epitome of romanticism.

* Büchner was the author of 'Wozzeck', which furnished Alban Berg with the libretto of one of the most moving works of art of the twentieth century, an opera in which romantic music undergoes the transfiguration of a final agony.

Büchner's story 'Lenz' was founded on biographical material concerning the life of a real person, the poet Lenz who wrote 'Sturm und Drang' and thus supplied the period with a convenient catch-phrase.

Büchner, who died at the age of twenty-three, can be considered as being in some respects the prototype of both Rimbaud and the Dadaists.

Knowledge accompanied by damnation, the transcendental vision whose cost is madness. The Romantic movement, with which opened the capitalist epoch now drawing to its cataclysmic finale, seems like a voice proclaiming the historical command: 'Thou shalt go thus far, but no further!'

Will the future show the birth of a race who will have superseded this decree?

*

The poems which follow are not a translation of selected poems of Hölderlin, but a free adaptation, introduced and linked together by entirely original poems. The whole constitutes what may perhaps be regarded as a persona.

The poem "Orpheus in the Underworld" has previously appeared in *The New Statesman & Nation*, and "Tenebrae" in *The London Mercury*; suitable acknowledgements are hereby made to the Editors of these reviews.

The texts of the poetic fragments translated in the second part of this book are published in the edition of Hölderlin's works edited by Franz Zinkernagel (Insel-Verlag, Leipzig, 1926). I am much indebted in the preparation of the present text to the French translation of Pierre Jean Jouve: "*Poèmes de la Folie de Hölderlin*" (J. O. Fourcade, Paris, 1930); and also the helpful criticism of Marianne Donhauser and of Carl Wilhelm Böhne.

D.E.G.

HÖLDERLIN'S MADNESS

I. FIGURE IN A LANDSCAPE

The verdant valleys full of rivers
Sang a fresh song to the thirsty hills.

The rivers sang:

“Our mother is the Night, into the Day we flow. The mills
Which toil our waters have no thirst. We flow
Like light.”

And the great birds

Which dwell among the rocks, flew down
Into the dales to drink, and their dark wings
Threw flying shades across the pastures green.

At dawn the rivers flowed into the sea.

The mountain birds

Rose out of sleep like a winged cloud, a single fleet,
And flew into a newly-risen sun.

— Anger of the sun: the deadly blood-red rays which strike oblique
Through olive branches on the slopes and kill the kine.

— Tears of the sun: the summer evening rains which hang grey
veils

Between the earth and sky, and soak the corn, and brim the lakes.

— Dream of the sun: the mists which swim down from the icy
heights

And hide the gods who wander on the mountain-sides at noon.

The sun was anguished, and the sea
Threw up its crested arms and cried aloud out of the depths;
And the white horses of the waves raced the black horses of the
clouds;
The rocky peaks clawed at the sky like gnarled imploring hands;
And the black cypresses strained upwards like the sex of a hanged
man.

* * *

Across the agonizing land there fled
Among the landscape's limbs (the limbs
Of a vast denuded body torn and vanquished from within)
The chaste white road,
Prolonged into the distance like a plaint.

Between the opposition of the night and day
Between the opposition of the earth and sky
Between the opposition of the sea and land
Between the opposition of the landscape and the road
A traveller came

Whose only nudity his armour was
Against the whirlwind and the weapon, the undoing wound,
And met himself half-way.

Spectre as white as salt in the crude light of the sky
Spectre confronted by flesh, the present and past
Meet timelessly upon the endless road,

Merge timelessly in time and pass away,
Dreamed face away from stricken face into the bourn
Of the unborn, and the real face of age into the fastnesses of death.

Infinitely small among the infinitely huge
Drunk with the rising fluids of his breast, his boiling heart,
Exposed and naked as the skeleton — upon his knees
Like some tormented desert saint — he flung
The last curse of regret against Omnipotence.
And the lightning struck his face.

* * *

After the blow, the bruised earth blooms again,
The storm-wrack, wrack of the cloudy sea
Dissolve, the rocks relax,
As the pallid phallus sinks in the clear dawn
Of a new day, and the wild eyes melt and close,
And the eye of the sun is no more blind —

Clear milk of love, O lave the devastated vale,
And peace of high-noon, soothe the traveller's pain
Whose hands still grope and clutch, whose head
Thrown back entreats the guerison
And music of your light!

The valley rivers irrigate the land, the mills
Revolve, the hills are fecund with the cypress and the vine,
And the great eagles guard the mountain heights.

Above the peaks in mystery there sit
The Presences, the Unseen in the sky,
Inscrutable, whose influences like rays
Descend upon him, pass through and again
Like golden bees the hive of his lost head.

2. SONG OF DESTINY

Soft are your footsteps on the soft ground
In the great light, O peaceful Presences!
The shining winds of heaven
Lightly touch you
As the musician's fingers
Touch the sacred strings.

They have no destiny, the heavenly ones
Who breathe like a sleeping child.
And pure is in their keeping
The forever flowering mind,
And the blessed eyes gaze long
Within the clear eternal peace.

But never unto us was given
To repose.
Man in his suffering blindly falls
And vanishes again from hour to hour
Like waves against the breakwater
Flung to and fro into uncertainty through time.

3. THE HALF OF LIFE

Adorned with yellow pears
And with wild roses filled,
The earth hangs in the lake.
And wondrous love-intoxicated swans
In peaceful holy waters dip their heads.

My woe! When winter comes
Where shall I find the rose?
Where shall I find the sunshine and
The shadows of the earth?
The cold unspeaking walls rise up,
The flags flap in the wind.

4. AGES OF LIFE

O towns of the Euphrates!
And Palmyra's streets!
O forests of pillars on the desert plain
What are you?

When you passed
Beyond the limit of our breath,
Through the smoke of the heavenly Presences and through
The distant fires, your crowns
Were taken from you. Now
I sit beneath the clouds (of which
Each has its resting-place), beneath
The ordered oaks, amid
The wastelands of the roe;
And foreign to me and dead they seem,
The blessed souls.

5. THE HARVEST

The ripe fruits are cast into the fire
And cooked, and tried upon the earth, and it is
A law
That everything returns to the within,
Thus spake the prophetic snakes which dream
Upon the hillsides of the sky. And there is much
Like a burden of wood upon the shoulders
To be preserved. The paths are treacherous.
And unordained
From side to side like horses pass
The prisoned Elements and old Principles of the Earth.
And a desire moves ever towards its free expression.
But there is much
To be preserved. And there is need of faith.
But we do not wish to see both before and behind.
Or let ourselves rock
As in the frailest barque upon the sea.

6. PATMOS

The God is near, and

difficult to grasp.

But danger fortifies the rescuing power.

In sombre places dwell the eagles; the Alps' sons

Go fearless forth upon the roads of the abyss

Across lightly constructed bridges. And since all round
there press

The peaks of time, and those so close

In love, are worn out on the separate heights,

Then give us the innocent waters,

O give us wings, that with the truest thought

We may fly yonder and return to this same place.

I spoke thus. And then rose

A guardian spirit, carried me away

More swiftly and still further than I dreamed,

Far from my house and home.

And as I passed, the light of dawn

Glowed on the shady woods and longed-for streams

Of my own land. I knew the earth no more.

And soon, with mysterious freshness shining

And rapidly growing beneath the footsteps of the sun,

In golden haze there blossomed forth
In a thousand peaks, a thousand glittering spires,

Asia, before my eyes. I blindly sought
For some familiar image,
A stranger to those wide streets where there descends
From Tmolus to the sea the Pactolus adorned with gold,
And the Taurus rises with the Messogis,
And the flowering garden like a peaceful fire,
But in the light on high, the silver snow
And sign of immortal life, on the unscaled wall
The age-old ivy grows, and on living pillars
Of cedar and of laurel
Stand the solemn palaces the Gods have built.

And all around the Asiatic gates,
Calling out here and there from the sea's uncertain plain,
There murmur the unshadowed roads:
But the pilot knows the islands.
When I heard
That Patmos was among the nearest isles,
I longed to disembark
And to approach its gloomy caves.
For it is not like Cyprus rich with springs
Or any of the other islands, it is not
In proud display that Patmos stands

But like a poor house full of hospitality,
And when from a wrecked ship, or weeping
For his lost land or for an absent friend
A stranger comes, she listens with good will;
And all her children, and the voices of the hot groves,
And the place where the sand falls, and where the fields
 are cracked,
And all the sounds
Hear him, and all resounds again
With love for the man's plaint.
Thus it was one day that she took in care
The belov'd of God, the seer
Who in his happy youth had gone

With the All-Highest's Son, inseparable from Him. . .

(Fragment)

7. ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD

Curtains of rock
And tears of stone,
Wet leaves in a high crevice of the sky:
From side to side the draperies
Drawn back by rigid hands.

And he came carrying the shattered lyre,
And wearing the blue robes of a king,
And looking through eyes like holes torn in a screen;
And the distant sea was faintly heard,
From time to time, in the suddenly rising wind,
Like broken song.

Out of his sleep, from time to time,
From between half-open lips,
Escaped the bewildered words which try to tell
The tale of his bright night
And his wing-shadowed day
The soaring flights of thought beneath the sun
Above the islands of the seas
And all the deserts, all the pastures, all the plains
Of the distracting foreign land.

He sleeps with the broken lyre between his hands,
And round his slumber are drawn back
The rigid draperies, the tears and wet leaves,
Cold curtains of rock concealing the bottomless sky.

8. 'AND LITTLE KNOWLEDGE BUT MUCH PLEASURE'

And little knowledge but much pleasure
Is given to mortal men.

Why dost thou suffice me not O lovely sun
On this May day?
Thou flower of my flowers, what have I more than thee?

Would that I were as children are!
I should be like the nightingale were I to sing
All my delight in one enraptured song!

9. NATIVE LAND

And no-one knows . . .

Yet let me walk
And gather the wild bays,
Expend my love for thee
O earth, upon thy roads,
Here where . . .

. . . and roses and their thorns

And the sweet limes send up their perfume from beside
The beechwood at noon, when the wild corn is alive
With the whisper of the growth in its straight stalks
And its ears bend all one way
As to the autumn — Now beneath
The lofty swaying of the oaks,
When I reflect, when I interrogate the airs,
The sound of bells

I know so well

Sounding like gold, is heard afar.
It is the hour when the birds wake anew.
Then all is well.

IO. PRINCE OF THE AIR

As the birds pass slowly by
The Prince gazes ahead
And happenings of the upper air
Are like cool breath against his breast
When there is silence round him
High above, but shining bright beneath
There lie the riches of the earth,
And with him go
In their first search for victory
The young.
But the Prince holds them back
With the slow beating of his wings.

II. THE EAGLE

My father crossed the Gothard range
Where waters fall . . .
And then along the coast towards Etruria
And by a straight route
Across the snows
Towards where Hemos and Olympus stand
And Athos casts a shadow
Towards Lemnos' caves.
Natives from the strongly perfumed forests
Of the Indus,
Came the parents.
But the grand-sire
Flew across the ocean
Full of penetrating thought;
And the king's golden head was all amazed
By the mystery of the waters. Then
The stormclouds gathered red above the ship
And the animals gazed dumbly at one another
Thinking only of their food.
But the mountains stand up silently around,
Where can we wish to stay?

12. SYBIL

The storm

bends the branches

And the raven sings

Thus is the time of God a journey sure

But thou Eternal song

And the poor pilot searches for the known

Look towards the star.

13. FORM AND SPIRIT

All is an inscape

And yet separates

Thus shelters the Poet

Fool! dost thou hope from face to face
To see the soul

thou shalt go among the flames.

I4. TO THE BELOVED (DIOTIMA)

Elysium

There with certainty I find
Towards you, Gods of Death

There Diotima

Heroes

I would sing of thee

But only tears

And in the night in which I walk I see extinguish thy
Clear eyes!

O spirit of the Sky.

15. 'AM I NOT FAR FROM THEE'

Am I not far from thee

Yet I am calmed

When I was a child, she was

the sister.

Yet now at last,

Thou wanderest where art thou

Where art thou?

16. '—PEACEFULLY THE NECKAR'

peacefully the Neckar

And the island

but above

the crowded room.

There, there

Neither hear nor see

a river.

then, then, cry out, that there may be light,

O Graces of the sky,

and that the festival

Of the gods of Joy may fall upon that day!

17. GREECE

For roads of the traveller?
Hillsides, in the sun shadows of trees
Where the road leads
To (the) church.
rains, like arrows of rain
And trees sleeping standing up, and yet
At the appointed time there come the footsteps of the sun
And so, as the warm mist
Glistens above the town,
So walks the sun upon the walls
And curtains of the rain

And as the ivy hangs
So hangs the branchless rain.
But with more beauty for the traveller
Blossoms the road
in freedom and changes like the corn.

Through the Gothard the horse reaches
The woods of Avignon. The laurels
Murmur around Virgil's path —

And may the sun never
Seek unmanfully the tomb.
All mossy grows the rose
Among the Alps. At the town gates
The flowers begin

Like crystals in the desert of the seas.
The gardens grow near Windsor. And with pomp
From London drives the carriage of the King.
The beautiful gardens change with the seasons.
On the canal. But right beneath extends
The world of the sea, shining and smooth.

18. TENEBRAE

Brown darkness on the gazing face
In the cavern of candlelight reflects
The passing of the immaterial world in the deep eyes.

The granite organ in the crypt
Resounds with rising thunder through the blood
With daylight song, unearthly song that floods
The brain with bursting suns:
Yet it is night.

It is the endless night, whose every star
Is in the spirit like the snow of dawn,
Whose meteors are the brilliance of summer,
And whose wind and rain
Are all the halcyon freshness of the valley rivers,
Where the swans,
White, white in the light of dream,
Still dip their heads.

Clear night!
He has no need of candles who can see
A longer, more celestial day than ours.

19. AUTUMN

Now the legends of the spirit leave the earth.
The spirit has been, and shall come again.
The legends turn towards humanity, we learn
Much about time, which passes so soon away.

Nature does not abandon the image of the past,
And so when the high days of the summer fade,
The autumn arrives on earth,
And the spirit of the seer is once more caught into the sky.

In a short time many things have changed,
The peasant, who has taken to the plough,
Sees how the year sinks to its joyous end,
In these images accomplished is the day of man.

The roundness of the earth, with rocks adorned,
Is not like that of clouds, which in the evening melt,
But is shown us in a single golden day,
And the perfection has no plaint.

20. WINTER

When pale snow decorates the countryside
And shines with a bright light on the extended plain,
The summer charms us from afar, the warmth of spring
Is often felt as the hour dies away.

Splendid are all appearances, the air more light,
The forest clear; and no man comes
Into the distant streets,
And all things smiling silence makes sublime.

Spring with its shimmer of flowers hardly seems
To please mortals as much, but the bright stars
Are very clear on high, with joy we see
The distant skies which almost never change.

The rivers, the plain and all created things,
Seem more dispersed, and clearer to the sight,
The warmth of life continues and the amplitude of towns
Seems more goodly than before in their unlimited extent.

21. SPRING

The sun returns to joys renewed,
The day with its sun-rays, like a flower,
Nature's adornment, to the heart appears
As hymns and songs appeared when they were born.

There is a new world in the valley's depths,
Serene is the morning hour in Spring,
And the day shines from the heights, and evening life
Also descends to meditate within.

* * *

The new day from the distant heights descends,
The morning from its twilight mist awakes
And laughs at men, and men bedecked and gay
Are bathed in sweetest joy.

In days to come new life would be revealed,
It seems that the great valley and the earth
Are brimmed with flowers, the sign of days of joy,
For with the Spring the plaint has died away.

22. SUMMER

This is the season of the year, the countryside
Of summer in its light and warmth;
The green of the splendid fields is spread
Everywhere where the foaming stream descends.

Across the mountains and the valleys marches day
With its all-powerful strength and with its rays,
And the clouds in the high spaces pass in peace
And seem like the year passing with its glorious train.

* * *

The days pass by
With the sound of gentle airs; when they exchange
The clouds against the splendour of the fields,
The end of the valley meets the mountains' dusk;

And the shadows of the forests spread around —
Look, where the distant stream flows down below,
The image of the distance is seen passing in the hours
When man has found the mysterious inner sense.

23. PERSPECTIVES

The open day is clear in images to man,
When the green of a distant view appears,
Before the clarity of evening towards twilight sinks
And the sounds of day by gentle echoes are prolonged.

Often the inner world is closed and full of clouds,
Man's mind perturbed and full of doubt,
But splendid Nature has rejoiced in its fine days
And doubt with its sombre questions stands far off.

* * *

When into the distance pass away
The lives of men,
There in the distance shines the vineyard season,
And present also are the empty fields of summer
And the dark image of the forest rises up.

That nature the seasons' images should multiply,
That she should stay while they slide swiftly on,
Is the ordainment of perfection; and the heights
Of the sky shine radiantly for man,
And the tree is crowned with flowers.

24. EPILOGUE

This severed artery
The sand-obliterated face
Amazed eyes high above catastrophe
Distributed — Is this the man's remains
Who walked the lap of lands, and sang?

Explosions of every dimension
Directions run away
Towards the sun
The bitter sunset, or
Who knows, where all things rise and fall,
Revolve, and meet themselves again?

This is the man of matted hair
And music, whom a wanderer
Had scented a long way off, by reason of
The salt blood in his heart,
The black sun in his blood,
The gestures of his skeleton, simplicity
Of white bones worn away
Like rock by milk of love.

Dissolve and meet themselves again
All things; the sandy artery
The severed head
Limbs strewn across the rocks
Like broken boats:
So shall their widespread body rise
And march, and marching sing.

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Hölderlin, Johann Christian Friedrich

Gascoyne, David
Hölderlin's madness.

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